

Morality in Government

Will you, therefore, let me know what evidence you have to support this charge?

Yours sincerely,

L. B. Pearson

I replied the next day by a letter dated December 15, 1964:

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I was sorry to learn by yours of December 14 that you had not been able to obtain a copy of my Nation's Business broadcast on December 11. Unfortunately I do not make a practice of circulating a speech other than providing Canadian Press with a copy.

It is quite true that I referred to a lack of integrity in high places in government. If you refer to the copy of the transcript you received from the C.B.C., you will find that I based this squarely on your own action of writing a letter to your Ministers outlining a code of ethics. This suggests that you yourself have become disturbed over the matter.

In case you have not been able to follow public reaction as indicated in press reports from right across the country, I am taking the liberty of enclosing a summary that has come to hand.

Perhaps I might digress for a moment to refer to some of this material, first, to an article written by Mr. Claude Ryan in *Le Devoir* of November 27, 1964. It uses a phrase which has become well established in the knowledge of the general public. The article reads in part as follows:

In any case, the facts reveal a grave lack of communication within the government. They seriously shake public confidence in Mr. Pearson. We are witnessing the explosion of the old Liberal garbage can in Montreal. Sordid stories have been accumulating for months. Mr. Pearson will pay dearly for the blunder he committed in giving his confidence to a clique against whom he had been duly warned.

In the same letter I referred also to an article in the *Hamilton Spectator* of November 28, 1964, which came to the same conclusion in the following words:

The Department of Justice is now under a heavy shadow. The first demand should be less for the resignation of a minister than a blunt facing by Prime Minister Pearson of this grave challenge to integrity in his government, and an immediate and exhaustive inquiry.

The *Winnipeg Tribune* of November 27, 1964, had this to say:

While Ottawa rocked with the latest dramatic move in the bribery-coercion case this morning, Prime Minister Pearson relaxed in dressing gown and slippers at the farm home of his brother-in-law at nearby St. Norbert.

So in my reply I substantiated the claim that there was disturbance across the country

over these matters. To continue with my letter, I wrote:

The fact, too, that your own parliamentary secretary found it necessary to resign also casts a shadow of suspicion in high places.

It is precisely because I am a member of the Privy Council that I felt duty bound to express this opinion.

Unhappily there is far too great a reluctance in Canadian government circles on the part of active Privy Councillors to resign from positions of public trust when actions have been severely criticized. This is in decided contrast to the policy in the United Kingdom where cabinet ministers resign at the slightest suggestion of dereliction in duty.

I appreciate your taking the time to write to me on this matter. It does provide me with an opportunity to place my comments in the proper perspective.

Yours sincerely

The Prime Minister's letter was written on December 14, 1964. It will be recalled that on the same day or more precisely in the early hours of the following day we had the final vote in the flag debate. I believe that vote was taken at about 2.15 a.m. in the morning of December 15. It was an exciting moment in the life of the last parliament, as those who took part will recall. As I was leaving the chamber I was accosted by a member of the administration, the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Robichaud). He asked me why I was looking so gloomy and I indicated I did not see anything to be very happy about on that occasion. He then told me I would look a lot gloomier when they exposed something they had on me. I began to search my conscience to see—

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Speaker, a question of privilege is involved in an accusation of that kind. I should like the hon. member to repeat exactly the words I used at that time. I did ask him if there was any truth in the rumours to that effect.

Mr. Churchill: Just a veiled threat.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The rumour government.

Mr. Robichaud: I did not make any statement in public. I asked personally the member concerned.

Mr. Dinsdale: The hon. member said he had something on me and that I would be hearing about it in due course.

Mr. Robichaud: That is not so.

An hon. Member: Just a rumour.

Mr. Robichaud: Tell the truth.

Mr. Dinsdale: I discussed this with several of my colleagues at the time and I was told